

[Ernest Spann]

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Tales - Personal Anecdote [?]

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Tarrant Co,Dist.,#7 [49?]

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Ernest Spann, 56, living at 1007 Woodard St, PO Box 298, R #2, Fort Worth, Texas, was born May 8, 1882 at Bedford Co, Tenn.

His father, Robert Spann, moved his family from Tennessee to Texas and settled in Fort Worth in the year of 1892. [?]

Ernest Spann and his wife, Eva Spann, accepted a job with the 'HF' ranch, in 1900. located in Baylor Co, 15 miles S. of Seymour and worked there for a period of four years.

His story of Range life follows:

"I was born in Bedford Co, Tenn, 1882 on a farm that my father owned and operated. My father moved his family to Texas in 1892, coming to Fort Worth.

"I spent my time going to school during my teens until I was about 16 years old. During my school years I learned to ride a hoss. My father owned a couple saddle animals and those critters provided me the means to learn.

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"I married when I was 17 years old, then was put to calculating on getting a job. I got wind of a job for a cowhand and a cooky on the 'HF' outfit, owned by Hamp Franchee, located in Baylor Co, 15 miles S. of Seymour. Eva, my wife, and I started for the ranch each straddled on a bronco and dragged out to to 'HF' ranch. We were taken on, she as cooky and I as a cowhand. That was in 1900 and we stayed with the outfit four years.

"My wife had, on the average, 15 hands to fix chuck for. Sometimes the number would be as low as eight and at times high as 20. During the [?] season the number of waddies would be just enough to attend to the general work, but during branding season and when there was a lot of shipping the number of hands would be up to 20. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 "We had the best of everything to eat and did most of our flue lining in the cook shack. Only during branding seasons, occasionally, we used the chuck wagon. My wife was ordered to feed the hands well and that she did. Of course, there were no fancy dishes fixed, but plenty of good solid food of all kinds needed, including chuck for the sweet tooth.

"The 'HF' out was a fenced range of 4000 acees. The outfir outfit also had an open range camp in the Skillet section of Texas. The critters were ranged in the Skillet range until the animals were to made ready for the market, then they were driven to the Baylor Co, camp for fatening. There was a steady movement, more or less, of critters from the Skillet range to the Baylor Co, ranch and from this ranch to the market. When a bunch of critters were ready for the market they would be driven to Seymour and there loaded on a train for shipment to Fort Worth.

"The cattle were the white face Herfords and easily handled. A stampede was a rare event and then it didn't amount to anything. The white face critters coundn't run fast no how. Once in a while a bunch would break for a run back to the ranch while we were driving the animals to Seymour. On the range we never had any stampedes.

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"Our big worry was caused by the cattle rustler and the brand artist. The rustler kept us peeling our eye all the year while the brand artist worked in the spring when the calf crop was coming on.

"The brand artist would watch for an unbranded calf and 3 and put the iron on it, toss the critter over the fence and take it to some other bunch of cattle. We lost many calves to the brand artist. We could tell when a calf was stolen by a calfless mother cow showing up. Of course, after we did the spring branding the calves would be safe.

"The cattle rustler stole stock for sale. That breed would cut the range fence and drive the crittees off. Later, after I quit the range, the rustler used the auto-truck and loaded the critters at the range, and then drove to market. We could always tell when a bunch of crittees were rustled by finding the range fence cut and the tracks of the crittees leading out through the gap.

"Fence ridees were kept busy riding the fence line watching for gaps cut by rustlees and broken wire. There was two men that did nothing else but repair the fence and keep it in good condition.

"Only once were we able to catch [the?] rustlers in the act. That time the fence rider rode up on the bunch as they were driving 25 head to the highway. Five men were too many for him, so the rider hit for the camp with the news. Ernest Dawson was top-screw and he sent six of us after the gang, while he hit for Seymour to notify the High-Sheriff.

"Us waddies caught up with the rustlers, about five miles from where the gap was cut, driving the crittees down the highway. It was dark and to trail the outfit we had to frequently get off of our hosses and examine the road for tracks. Ever 4 cross trail had to be watched and we had to keep our eye peeled for the trail taking off a cross the prairie. We finally spied a bunch of moving objects ahead. We all gave our mounts the gut-hooks and lit out to cut down on the rustlees suddenly, but when we drove into the herd there was no

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rustlers in sight. They had sighted us coming and lit out leaving their loot. About that time, Davis, the Sheriff and several deputies arrived. They took up the trail of the hosses's hoofs and it lead them into Seymour where the trail was lost.

“Occasionally, a rustler or two would be caught, arrested and tried with some convections, but far more steals took place than convections.

“The steady hands on the 'HF' ranch, during my stay there, were Erenst Dawson, the top-screw, second to Clyed Franchee, the main screw's son. Then the regular hands, Odd Hutchinson, Tom Toliver, Tex Mathews, my wife and I.

“While we did not have to herd the critters to keep the herd on the range, because the fence took care of that job, we did a tolerable lot of range riding, watching for injured and sick animals. Two riders were used to do nothing else but ride the range.

“The critters were fed grain feed regularly and that job kept four of us busy taking feed to various spots on the range, where all of the, two to three thousnad, critters could get at it.

“One thing stands out in my mind about the bunch of waddies on the 'HF' and that was the way we all got along together. We were just like one gig big family and I don't mean a fighting 5 outfit.

“The boys called the cooky 'Queen' and they treated her as one. She called the waddies 'her boys' and treated the bunch as she would her boys. So between the boys and the cook things ran smooth. If the bunch hankered for some special chuck they would tell the Queen and always get it. The Queen had a system about her goodness, because she knew the bunch would not forget her on paydays and there always was something coming her way in the form of presents.

“We had our good times as well as lot of work. We did a lot of card playing and poker was the main game we played the most. Then we did a lot of target [shooting?], had looping

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matches, hoss wrangling and sports of that sort. Tex Mathews was able to agitate the cat gut so we had fiddle music occasionally. All in all we had a pert time.

“The best hoss wrangler and all around rider I have ever watched straddle a hoss was Odd Hutchinson. He did the wrangling of the wild critters brought in from the range, which were broke to the saddle. Wrangling a hoss was play for Odd and he wouldn't trade his job to being King of Gila Gulch. I, or anyone else I ever chined to, had never seen Odd take a spill off of a critter. He knew hoss character and every movement of the pitcher and could sense what move was coming in time to be sit for it.

“There was not much roping necessary on the 'HF', because those white face critters are a tame breed and will not run from a rider[?] Therefore, I did not see much real range looping, done 6 except when the boys practiced. Tex Mathews was the handy boy with the rope in our bunch. He could swing a pretty loop and put it just at the point he wanted it placed. Now, I want to prattle about the real artist with the six-gun, that was Tom Toliver. He was just as good with a moving target as with a still one. I have many times held a match between my fingers, off 25 paces, and he would light the match with a bullet from his gun.

“If you ask whom I consider the best camp cook that I know off, I'll have to give that honor to the Queer Queen , because I am still living with her and want to continue doing so, but at that she is entitled to the honor.

“At the end of four years work my wife insisted that we quit and set to building a farm home for our selves. I consented and ended my range career.